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THE

# Commonweal

## THE LAY APOSTOLATE

## An Emerging Theology

by Louis J. Putz

## Social Action in America

by Dennis J. Geaney

## New Frontiers

by Lydwine van Kersbergen

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THE
# Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

## week by week

### FREE WORLD DEFENSE

IT IS CURIOUS how the basic elements required for the defense of the West remain constant in this world of change. In a period marked by such developments as supposed de-Stalinization, uprisings among the satellites, growing independence in the colonial world, strides in the industrialization of Communist China and spectacular advances in the destructive power of nuclear weapons together with the means of delivering them, the essential defense problem stays much the same. As former Secretary Acheson recently put it: Western Europe and the United States must continue strong and united enough to prevent any further Soviet expansion. This is as true now as it was in Mr. Truman's day.

The present Russian leadership gives every indication of its determination to solidify its tier of satellite states in Eastern Europe and to integrate these nations further into Soviet economic and military programs. Varying concessions to individual states have this in view. And Khrushchev's latest terms for reuniting East Germany with its larger and more prosperous western counterpart are so exacting that perpetuation of a divided Germany is assured. Obviously the continued enslavement of the peoples behind the Curtain is an abhorrent prospect. But the existence of this ring of restive peoples serves as a deterrent to any Russian westward advance, as military communications through such bitterly hostile areas would be so difficult to maintain—not to mention the likelihood of further uprisings.

There is another, indirect, way in which the subject status of the Russian satellites could bolster the defenses of the West. At the United Nations and in broader world relationships, the plight of the captive peoples could serve to thwart the propaganda aimed by the Kremlin at the underdeveloped countries. In order for this possibility to develop, the Asian and African peoples will have to become convinced that this subjugation is colonialism of the worst sort, must somehow be delivered from preoccupation with their own desperate problems, which has thus far kept most of them from seeing this subjection by Moscow in its true light.

FROM THE TOWERS of the Kremlin what lies just beyond its tier of satellites is a string of American military and air bases equipped with deterring nuclear weapons. For several years these posed a threat of mass retaliation with big bombs. By now this armory has been considerably diversified to include small tactical atomic weapons. Resort to force by the NATO powers would therefore no longer necessarily involve a war of extinction. Because of this the Administration which made so much of the "exhausting" effect of "little wars" in the 1952 campaign is said to be re-examining its position. (Yet if a war should break out, could the Soviet Union be counted on to abide by any explicitly or implicitly accepted limitations on types of weapons?)

In any case American military experts widely differ as to our present strength. Some have a feeling that by concentrating on a pilotless ultimate weapon (with an H-bomb warhead) the Russians have left us in the ruck. Yet who can say with unqualified assurance that to have sacrificed our original lead in capacity to destroy for the sake of a diversity intended to meet any conceivable military emergency was clearly a mistake?

But if collective defense is still of the essence for the free world, the requirements for sustaining it are ever changing. The European Payments Union, which is such an important pillar in the



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NATO alliance structure, is greatly threatened, for instance, by Germany's mounting balance of credits, coupled with the two billion dollar cumulative debit of France. In the impending West German elections an Adenauer victory is of key importance for the fortunes of Europe. Britain has her own problems, among which balances of payments are foremost. Joint participation of these three countries in the development of Africa is one of the proposed remedies at hand.

Defense, then, involves both economic and political ramifications. It will continue to demand of all participants substantial treasure and personnel. It will keep on bearing down hard on the individual citizen. The Soviet threat is so powerful and flexible that there are no short-cuts or single lines of defense. On the contrary, the free peoples of the world need ever to be widening and diversifying their efforts, which should include reaching out to peoples held in thrall in satellite lands and within Russia itself.

## POLITICAL REALIGNMENTS

THE PRINCIPAL issue of the civil rights bill, of course, the purpose for which the bill was designed, is to guarantee the civil rights of Negroes. But the four-week Senate debate on the bill, which at this time has not yet become law, revealed more than a new determination for the bill and the expected Southern opposition. The debate and ensuing comments not only exposed deep divisions within the traditional political blocs but it intensified the shift of interests and loyalties.

Although the full significance of the realignment is difficult to gauge, some idea of its extent can be gained by comparing the statements political leaders issued during the last national election with the pertinent statements they have recently made.

Republican spokesmen could, during the campaign, speak more forcefully concerning the need for civil rights legislation than could Democratic leaders, who felt strongly the opposition within their own divided party. And after the election it seemed clear that the political advantages of a civil rights bill would accrue principally to the Republican Administration under which it was passed. For the election already showed that many Negroes had cast their first Republican vote.

This is only one of the reasons—but it is an important reason—why the Southern Democrat-Orthodox Republican coalition began to weaken. In the recent civil rights debate many conservative Republicans not only deserted this coalition but worked hard for a strong civil rights bill. And it was left to Senator Lyndon Johnson to persuade liberals within his own party that the Southerners had a measure of reason in their arguments.

But consider the statements political leaders have felt called upon to make. Senator Johnson has not only accused the Republican National Chairman, Meade Alcorn, of "backroom politics" for working to strengthen the civil rights bill, but he has charged that Vice President Nixon has exerted undue pressure. He has thus credited Republican forces with more effort than other Democrats would willingly grant. Adlai Stevenson, for instance, said that greater pressure from the White House would have resulted in a firmer and better bill; when questioned about Senator Johnson he replied only that he must be considered a Presidential possibility.

Senator William Knowland, the recognized leader of old guard Republicans, was one of the most vigorous leaders of the civil rights forces, and accepted the amended bill with criticism. Only eighteen Senators voted against the amended bill —seventeen Southerners and Wayne Morse, the latter because he thought the bill had been emasculated. Senator Richard L. Neuberger, a Democrat from Oregon and a strong civil rights advocate, called the finished bill "a step in the proper direction, however limited and modest that step may be." The minority leader of the House, Representative Joseph W. Martin, has twice shifted his attitude toward the bill.

It is clear that most of these statements do not correspond to past political coalitions within either Congress or the two major parties. The Conservative Republican-Southern Democrat coalition has been replaced, at least temporarily, by a group composed of Western liberals and the least conservative members from the South. It seems very unlikely that right-wing Southerners will ever again work as closely with old guard Republicans as they have in the past. And it is also clear that the Democratic party front provided by Senator Johnson is tenuous and temporary. It is even more clear that if the liberals were to develop a strong leader under whom they could unite, the traditional political blocs would be forever shattered.

## APPEAL TO ROME

ARCHBISHOP Joseph F. Rummel of New Orleans has long taken a vigorous stand against the evil of racism—a stand too strong for



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some members of his archdiocese, a few of whom have particularly resented and resisted his solemn condemnation of segregation two years ago as "morally wrong and sinful." Recently this resistance to Archbishop Rummel's policies on segregation came to public attention once again when a New Orleans organization called the Association of Catholic Laymen made public a letter addressed by them to Pope Pius. In it, the Louisiana laymen described Archbishop Rummel's condemnation of segregation as "a strange new doctrine" and asked the Pope to countermand the Archbishop's program of integration in the archdiocesan institutions.

Here, surely, is a tragic situation, involving persons who consider themselves, in their own words, as "conscientious and sincere Catholics." And we do not think that abhorrence for racism should blind anyone to a certain amount of truth in their arguments. In support of their position, for example, the writers of this letter say that in some places "even the clergy and the Church itself have participated and are participating" in the perpetuation of segregation in schools and elsewhere. Here it would be easy enough to say that the pattern of segregation found in many Southern states was not approved by Catholic leaders but was only tolerated as a lesser and, at the time, perhaps a necessary evil, and then let the matter go at that. But obviously many Catholics did not actually grasp the difference between toleration of an existing, hard-to-eradicate social abuse and positive approval of the evil of racism, made concrete in Southern states by a segregation imposed by law and enforced by the police power. If segregation itself is a complicated subject, the teaching of the Church on the essential equality of the races has always been quite clear, and Rome has spoken often on the topic. Nonetheless, it is also undeniable that Catholics, high and low, have too often obscured the basic Christian position on race by silence in the face of evil, a silence that was taken by many for approval of injustice. Whatever else it does, the letter of the Louisiana laymen should provide an occasion for all of us to search our own consciences in this matter. It certainly should not be taken as an excuse for smugness by Catholics—especially in publications which in years gone by did little enough to form Christian consciences in this matter.

Yet, no matter what errors of omission or emphasis may have been made in the past, the fact remains that the protesting laymen have challenged their bishop, not on some question where it might be argued that he had overstepped his authority, but on a matter on which he had a clear right and duty to act. In addition, they have done so by way of the public prints and in a manner that constitutes a blunt challenge to his legitimate authority to determine policy in his diocese. Under the circumstances, any direct answer by the Pope to this appeal is very unlikely. An indication of his sentiments, however, was immediately given to the press by a "high Vatican official" who made it quite clear that Archbishop Rummel had the full support of Pope Pius in pursuing his policy of integration.

This reaction from the Vatican was, of course, no surprise; nothing else could be expected. The tragedy lies in the fact that so many, in the United States and elsewhere, have still failed to learn and accept wholeheartedly the basic Christian teaching involved in this matter. Now one can only hope that the members of the Louisiana organization will cease their resistance to the policy laid down by their bishop and turn instead to what must be a continuing task for all—the effort to go ever deeper into the implications of Christian truth for the individual and for society.

## IMPENDING CRISIS

ONCE AGAIN the colleges and the entire country have been warned about an impending educational crisis. Colleges and universities are undoubtedly aware of the dangers for they underwent sudden strains after the war and have some idea of what lies ahead. And there should be few literate people in our society who have not heard the warning before. But the report recently issued by the Presidential Commission is one of those statements which are calculated to bring practical responses.

The report urged deductions in income tax for those who are paying for a student's education. It emphasized the shortage of schools and teachers. And, to remedy the lack of teachers, it recommended that teachers be restored to a "competitive position" in the labor market. This could—and should—be done, it stated, by increasing faculty salaries seventy-five to eighty per cent.

"The plain fact is," stated one of the strongest sections of the report, "that the college teachers of the United States, through their inadequate salaries, are subsidizing the education of students, and in some cases the luxuries of their families. . . ."

The criticisms and recommendations of the report may have a ring of familiarity. But they should prevent education from being classed with the weather—about which no one does anything.



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# An Emerging Theology

**"IT WILL NEED A TEAM OF SCHOLARS, PRIESTS AND LAYMEN TO EFFECT THE CHRISTIAN SYNTHESIS OF THE MODERN WORLD"**

LOUIS J. PUTZ

TO ONE WHO reflects on the significant works that have appeared in recent years on the subject of the laity's role in the Church—the writings of Guardini in German, of Suhard, de Montcheuil, de Lubac, Philips, Perrin and most recently Congar in French—a theology of the laity seems to be emerging. Much of this theological research has been stimulated by the far-seeing and courageous leadership given by the Papacy of the last seventy years.

It was Pope Leo XIII who saw a new world taking shape, a world based on democratic processes, a world staggered by the impact of unprecedented scientific and industrial developments, a world in which the working man became conscious of his strength and worth through union organizations. The great Pontiff pleaded with the Catholic faithful in encyclical after encyclical to accept this new world and make their contribution toward it. The answer came by way of Catholic political parties, Catholic labor unions, Catholic professional groups.

But the response was slow and insufficient. Pope St. Pius decided that the Catholic people needed a deeper religious foundation for their world mission. He diagnosed the need of the Church to be a group of zealous lay apostles in every parish. To achieve this he launched the liturgical revival within the Church and directed priest and bishop to provide active religious participation on a parish level. He was the first to give a name to this lay movement. He called it "Catholic Action." Pope Pius XI continued the work begun by his distinguished predecessors. He realized that apostles are not born, they must be formed. He consequently greatly encouraged apostolic youth movements.

Pope Pius XII took this process a step further by strongly promoting an apostolic laity through international lay congresses. Almost daily he addresses himself to groups of pilgrims and urges them and the people they represent to view their work life, their professional careers, their political opportunities, as providential areas of the apostolate. His encyclicals, *Mystici Corporis, Mediator Dei* and *Humani Generis,* are all concerned with the central theme of the people of God. His legislation concerning evening Mass, communion fasting and congregational participation, not to speak of the restored Holy Week liturgy, points to the central reality in the Church of the people of God. It is in this light, too, that the modern interest in Mariology can be viewed. Mary is not only the layman par excellence, in the Church, but she represents the human element of cooperation in the divine plan of redemption.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the spotlight of theological research and preoccupation be focused on the general area of the layman's role in the Church. We must not forget that the American Church is a child of the Council of Trent with no roots or traditions in a Christian climate such as the European Catholic can fall back on. The people's role in the Church is widely thought to consist in building and supporting the plant. This makes this emphasis on the people's apostolic role in the Church at once more vitally important, but also more difficult and pioneering.

A NOTION of the role of the laity that is very widespread and would put serious limitations on the entire development of the lay apostolate is the narrow concept that the lay apostolate is merely auxiliary to the priestly apostolate. Very often we hear it said that we need lay apostles because of the insufficient number of clerics or religious. Or again, the lay apostolate is necessary because the priest is too far removed from the market place in a secularistic society. These may be aggravating circumstances, but to consider the lay apostolate as merely a temporary, stop-gap measure is to miscue on the total significance of the Popes' stress and effort in the direction of developing an adult laity within the Church.

No doubt, there will always be a real need for individuals and groups, like the Legion of Mary, to lend a powerful hand to the priest in his apostolate of saving souls. The early Church had its lay apostles and its deaconesses. But to envisage the lay apos-

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tolate solely in relation to the priestly apostolate of instruction and dispensation of the sacraments, or merely in relation to the administration of parochial life, is really to sell short the main effort of the Church. For the Church strives to incarnate the present society, with its emphasis on total conquest of the world through science and industry for the liberation of man from economic and political servitude. Obviously an adult and responsible laity is necessary in the Church to meet the challenge of this world mission.

Through the character of Baptism and Confirmation all men are called to be apostles and the obligation of charity towards one's neighbor makes this duty doubly imperative. Not all Catholics, however, are called to be apostolic on the same level and to the same degree. Upon all there falls the duty to be a *Christian witness*. They must direct their lay lives toward the apostolate of witnessing Christ in a secular, materialistic world. Some will be called to commit themselves more fully to the *apostolate of Christian influence*. They will view their particular role in the temporal order, be it in the teaching profession, in social work, in politics, in the fields of communication, as an apostolate. A third category will make *the apostolate their life* through furthering the Kingdom of God in the lay state but in close collaboration with the priest. This is still the lay apostolate: it is the layman bringing Christ into a secular society, but he is doing it directly under the supervision and under the general mission of the hierarchy, assisted by the priest. On all three levels the field of the apostolate is the temporal order, not the exclusive field of religion where the priest is at home.

THE LAYMAN'S first responsibility as a member of the Church is to be a *Christian witness* in the providential sector of his temporal vocation. To be an *alter Christus* (a phrase coined by Tertullian to designate every member of Christ, not merely the priest) would call for an apostolic outlook even in a Christian society. In the materialistic, individualistic and secularistic society in which we live, this task is quite a challenge. For example, trying to live a Catholic family life in the context of the modern economic structure is asking for hardship. Salary and wage structure, housing, recreation patterns, cost of education, medical expense, all these institutional needs of the family favor the single person or the childless couple. But the family has at least the parish to fall back on. The parish is largely made up of families and is generally dedicated to the education of their children, whereas what we might designate as the downtown area, where most of the decisions are made that affect the lives of men, is almost entirely removed from the influence of the Church. The doctor, the lawyer, the businessman, the workingman—each must save his soul through his daily occupation. To be a Christian witness in this area can become sheer heroism.

Witnessing for Christ is more than merely not giving bad example. It means carrying the Gospel message into the market place where the layman is at home. The Church, as such, has no special competence in the various specialized fields of business, politics, professions, industry, the media of communication. These areas belong to the layman. But the layman's salvation is not achieved merely by Sunday observance, but through loving God and his neighbor with his whole mind, heart and strength in all his human activity. It is generally by the same acts that persons bear witness to Christ and work toward building up the earthly city. These acts bear witness to Christ by their very qualities of unselfishness, purity, perseverance in generosity, universality of generosity, the exclusion of all hatred and discrimination and prejudice. Only occasionally will the layman be given the opportunity to bear witness by an explicit reference to Christ and to the Church as when he takes a Christian position on divorce, or birth control, when he prefers to suffer political defeat, or economic boycott rather than compromise on the racial or religious questions. By the very fact that all these acts are seen to stem from their true source and cause, Christ and the Church, they become explicit testimony in favor of Christ and the Church.

BECAUSE HEROIC sanctity cannot be demanded of all men constantly, because certain basic human needs as regards housing, work and dignity are normally required for the practice of virtue, certain laymen are needed to devote themselves with more apostolic dedication to bringing about a world safe for Christianity. This is the second level of apostolic involvement. These people make their whole life an apostolate. They are the John the Baptists of our time who level the hills of prejudice, and fill the valleys of human misery so that Christ, in the person of the priest, can come and be heard. If we believe in Creation, in the dignity of the human person, in the vocation of all mankind, in universal redemption through Christ, this faith must first of all be translated into the respect and service of man and the building of a human order. Otherwise faith is merely hypocrisy and our religion Pharisaism: "For I was hungry and you did not give me to eat."

Who are these full-time apostles who spend themselves for the temporal welfare of their fellowmen? They may be journalists dedicated to a cause; they may be union organizers, social workers, teachers or professors; they may be in politics or civil service with a will to serve the community; they may be in the



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foreign service or in the council chambers of industry, finance or government. Wherever they are, they continue the work of incarnation in a Christian spirit, not by some kind of noisy manifestation of zeal, but by providing the true notion of the human person, of the family, of freedom, all the real bases of a completely human order. The most efficacious apostolate will not always be one of explicit and direct evangelization, but will often consist in this adapted and progressive educational approach, which really makes its way towards God, and which prepares the revelation of His true name. The member of the Church has the responsibility of bringing about a just, fraternal and human state of affairs in collaboration with all men. Certainly the layman is in the best position to effect this through a dedicated way of life. It would be interesting to make a sociological study in our educational system to discover to what extent this aspect of the lay apostolate is offered as an ideal to be sought after, to what extent this type of apostolate is recognized by the parochial clergy as a genuine contribution to the cause of Christ.

It is not easy to be a Christian witness in a secularistic society. It is difficult to know how to go about building a Christian social order in a world that is as complex and unbaptized as is the world of the twentieth century, with its scientific advance on all frontiers, with its tremendous industrial and economic development, with its dynamic drive toward unity. Universal education and democratic processes have changed the world and, while the principles of Christianity and the basic order of nature are ever valid, a new synthesis needs to be elaborated. In recent years the Popes have asked the laity to make the apostolate their life in the new movements of Catholic Action. They have asked laymen to work with the priest and theologian in order to awaken among the faithful an awareness of their apostolic responsibilities. A whole new apostolic literature, a new spirituality for the training of the lay apostle needs to be created.

What is of supreme necessity is a theology that will meet the needs of the times. A theology of creation will have a heyday with the new developments of science and industry. A theology of man will have to take into account man's newly found liberty from economic slavery—it will need a theology of work, a theology of leisure time, a theology of education, a theology of marriage. A theology of Redemption has to take into account the new sociological, medical and legal realities, relations of Church and State in a pluralistic society. This herculean task cannot be done by the priest or theologian unaided, as was done in the time of St. Thomas Aquinas. It will need a team of scholars, priests and laymen to effect the Christian synthesis of the modern world that Cardinal Suhard called for in his *Essor et Déclin de l'Eglise*.

THE GERMAN theologian Urs von Balthasar has criticized the Catholic Action movements as being merely a disguised way for the priest to reassert himself in the temporal order. It is true that Catholic Action, being a collaboration between priest and layman, an organ of the Church under the hierarchy, does not have for its task the restoration of the temporal order. That task belongs to the layman in his political, economic or scientific capacity. But Catholic Action has been instituted to bring the needs of the world to the attention of the priest and theologian, to set up among clergy and laity an awareness of the apostolic responsibility that lies ahead and finally to devise programs and techniques of formation that will call forth generous souls, equipped to be Christian witnesses and willing to commit themselves to the task of extending the Kingdom of God on earth.

For the smooth development of an authentic lay apostolate some ground rules need to be noted lest the embryonic efforts turn to disappointment. The lay competence of the lay apostolate should be respected. The competence of the layman is in the temporal order. This, after all, is his field of the apostolate.

The lay apostolate is of necessity still pioneering, in this country at any rate. Without a tradition of a Christian temporal order to fall back on, this work of establishing a Christian social order will be slow and painstaking. There is correspondingly an advantage in working in virgin territory. We do not have to live down sins of the past, like the loss of the working class in Europe.

The priest should recognize the need to listen and learn from the layman about the temporal order if a living theology is to be forthcoming. A living theology that stays abreast of a swiftly evolving world is a vital necessity for the layman. On the other hand a dialogue between priest and people, between the world of religion and the downtown world, should help the priest to break the bread of life for his flock more realistically.

Finally, the lay apostolate, like the Church and like the modern world, is universal in scope. It will not be restricted to parish limits even though it should have its roots in the parish. An attempt to isolate it from the total mission is to endanger its vitality.



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# Social Action in America

DENNIS J. GEANEY

CHOOSING A date for the beginning of a social movement must be somewhat arbitrary. Yet some person, event, or organization has to be taken as a symbol to dramatize the starting point. With the obvious risk of over simplification, I would suggest the founding of the Catholic Worker in 1933 as the beginning of the modern lay apostolate in the Catholic Church in the United States. This choice of a movement that captured the imagination and shocked the consciences of clerical and lay Catholics everywhere in the United States allows, unfortunately, nothing more than a nod to such people and organizations as Fredrick Kenkel, the Central Verein and the Militia of Christ for Social Service.

Working through its Houses of Hospitality, its paper, its forums and public meetings, the Catholic Worker was a lay, storefront Christianity which gave flesh, blood and local color to the Sermon on the Mount. It set in operation the spiritual and corporal works of mercy in the Skid Rows and Boweries of an economically depressed America. When volunteers came to live Christianity, they were given a dish cloth or a peeling knife instead of an English translation of the *Summa*.

Experience with the Catholic Worker had a traumatic effect. Those who came to the movement learned the riches of the doctrine of the Mystical Body and the wonders of living a liturgical life from ministering to the poor as well as from the evening discussion on the Church's mission today. Work in the Houses of Hospitality, in Friendship Houses, and other similar efforts in the ghettos and slums brought to the volunteers lasting commitments to Christ and a way to lay sanctity. It was a problem approach to the spiritual life. The staff came to alleviate economic misery or mitigate the evils of segregation and in the process they deepened their life in Christ.

A second direction the modern lay apostolate took in the middle thirties was in the field of social action. This movement was based on the conviction that soup kitchens were not enough. The goal was to go to the root of the problem so that the economic order might become a mirror of social justice. Parish labor schools, city and diocesan-wide institutes and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists came into being. What was involved was to a wide extent an educational effort, at least in its first stages. Serious attempts were made to apply the principles of a good social order as elaborated in the encyclicals to the present scene. When translated into action, this meant that Catholic laymen were helping to organize the unorganized, obtaining more effectiveness in labor affairs, and flushing out the Communists from positions of power inside the unions. Although little was said about their becoming lay apostles, those who participated did see this as their apostolate in the Church. Systematic spiritual motivation was seldom given, but through osmosis and the work itself, dedicated lay people with an apostolic viewpoint and an enlightened social conscience were produced.

The third effort of this era was hardly more than an experiment before World War II. It was an attempt to transplant the Jocist type of Catholic Action so forcefully championed by Pius XI to American soil. Unlike the problem-centered storefront and the education-oriented social action apostolates, this approach was an avowed attempt to form Christians against the background of their total life, which included work, neighborhood, home, recreation and religion. It gave the layman a sacramental basis for his apostolate; the spirituality it fostered was solidly anchored in the Church's liturgy.

BECAUSE THIS form of the apostolate embraced the temporal order as the area of operation for its members, it was different in essence from a Happy Death Society or a Third Order. In this view the temporal or secular had a sacred aspect and thus was worthy of commitment. The chaplains who spent themselves to develop apostles among the workers and students were mentally conditioned by depression times and were passionately concerned with restoring justice to the society order. They were literally carrying out the injunction of Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*: "The first and immediate apostles to the workers ought to be workers. . . It is chiefly your duty . . . to search diligently for these lay apostles both of workers and employers, to select them with prudence, and to train and instruct them properly."

This overruling concern with work-life reflected itself in the programs and spirituality of these Catholic

Father Dennis J. Geaney, O.S.A., who has long been concerned with the lay apostolate, himself works with the Young Christian Students.



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Action organizations. A Young Christian Worker would be as much at ease at a union or precinct meeting as he would at a parish dance or religious discussion club. Yet, although some fully formed Christians came out of these attempts, the overall results were hardly commensurate with the effort unless one viewed them as seeds for a future flowering.

All this is, admittedly, a very abbreviated account of what could be a book-length story. Necessarily, such a capsule view of the period prior to the end of the second world war omits mention of older groups—such as the Sodality and the NCWC lay organizations—which made efforts to bring their member organizations into line with the needs of the modern world. But it serves to introduce our main concern of the present: What has happened to the depression-oriented lay apostolate in this era of progress and prosperity?

The upward mobility of the American urban-centered Church is obvious. In the case of Catholics this trend is even more pronounced than with the American people as a whole. When the newcomers from Puerto Rico and the South come to the rapidly expanding metropolitan areas of the North, they tend to settle in the center or inner rings of the city. There they often take over the homes of the second- and third-generation American Catholics who, with a newly acquired rise in economic status, resettle in the outer rings of the city or the suburbs. Today the type of parish which is dominant in the United States is not the rural, downtown or national parish, but the parish on the edge of the city or just beyond it in the lands of suburbia. The Holy See has recognized this development by recently establishing a suburban diocese on Long Island with the village of Rockville Centre as the see "city."

The typical American Catholic is no longer a hewer of wood and drawer of water. In the days of John Carroll the American Church was a tiny but respected minority group, but with the waves of immigration it took the face of the unwanted and unwashed foreigner. Today it has the clean-cut appearance of a congenial and respectable suburbanite. Maybe many Americans fear the Catholic hierarchy, but the rank-and-file Catholic is generally considered a decent fellow who keeps his lawn in good trim and is an exemplary family man to boot.

If we wish to get a glimpse of the new American Catholic we shall not find him in the *Power Elite,* but we may spot him as an *Organization Man* or recognize him in *The Lonely Crowd.* If you want to get his profile as a Catholic, talk to his pastor. You will get a warm and glowing account of his generosity with time and money and his overwhelming concern to see that his children get a Catholic education. Typically, though, he is not concerned with the race problem—in fact, he may have come to the suburbs in flight from it. We must not stereotype the new American Catholic as the man in the gray flannel suit, however, for he may be a card-carrying union member or even a business agent. But if he is, he may be satisfied with his union status; he is not inclined to fight about it or look upon it as an apostolate. He is, in short, a man of the prosperous fifties, not the depression thirties.

IN THE WAKE of the vast social changes that have taken place in the past fifteen years, the apostolate, too, must change or die. Our storefront missions to the poorest and the racially oppressed still exist, but in diminished numbers. No longer do these centers represent a major training center for a lay apostolic life. The social action movement of the thirties and forties has had many of its objectives realized. In the North unions are recognized as a part of industrial life. Added to this, unions have their own education programs for their leaders, and Communism is no longer a major union problem. Currently there is a long term re-thinking job underway, coordinated by the Social Action Department of the NCWC. This summer the Department is sponsoring its third annual conference for the leaders of the movement, and the theme of this year's meeting reveals the status of the movement: "Changing Catholic Social Action in a Changing World."

The third type of apostolic lay movement, however, that inspired by Jocism, is today a going concern. While the Young Christian Workers were centered in city worker parishes, they made relatively little progress. They found that it is difficult to interest young people in social reform when the shoe does not pinch. However, in the past few years, after much debate, a fresh and realistic approach has been made to young people. The Y.W.C. has now accepted the fact that the depression is over and that an apostolate of young adults can and must be built against the background of a prosperous economy and a better educated community. This has been effected without an abandonment of the social problem, but simply by redefining it.

When the Y.C.W. was moving forward only haltingly in the late forties, the same principles and techniques were adapted to family groups and proved highly successful. In the years since then, the growth of the Christian Family Movement and allied family action groups, along with the Cana movement, has been nothing less than phenomenal. Today there is hardly an area of the country in which one of these family organizations has not taken root.

In view of the success of the family apostolate, there is no question about the increasing desire of lay people to make an intelligent contribution to the life of the Church. There are many reasons, both natural and supernatural, that have contributed to the unique and swift development that has taken place in recent years.



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Among them I would include the removal of Catholics from immigrant status, increasing years of formal education in Catholic schools, more leisure time, greater economic security, the desire to discuss mutual problems in small groups, the desire for community as a result of mobility, the repeated calls of the Popes to Catholic Action, the deeper sharing in the liturgical life of the Church, the desire to maintain Catholic family values in a pluralist society, and the need for small groupings in large parishes. All these factors and others have played their part.

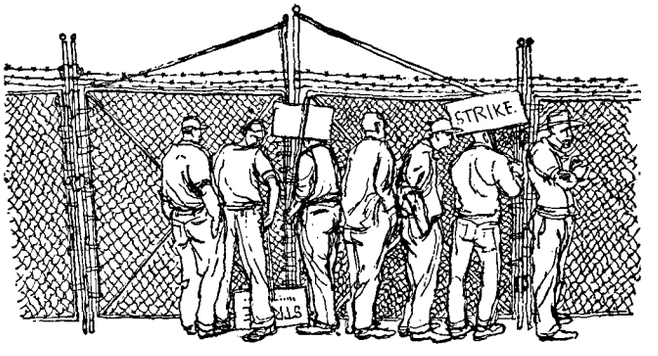
As far as the future of the lay apostolate in the United States is concerned, there is no sign that there will be a reversal of the trend for more and more people to become involved in the mission of the Church as a lay vocation. Indeed, the evidence is very much to the contrary. The shortage of priests and religious to staff parishes and schools will be a constant pressure on bishops and pastors to appeal to the laity for assistance. Yet large questions face us, involving such points as status for the layman, training, motivation, and organizational structure. The answer to these questions will in large part determine the future direction and depth of the lay apostolate in this country. And one of the most serious questions is illustrated by the problem that confronts the family apostolate.

THE IDENTIFICATION of the family apostolate with the suburbs disturbs many of the people who have given themselves to this apostolate as unselfishly as any storefront or Skid Row apostle. They never planned that the family apostolate should be the preserve of any one stratum of society. People who began their apostolate in the depression days often look askance at the 1957 family version of Catholic Action, saying that it will never develop Philip Murrays or Dorothy Days. And it is true that there are people within the ranks of the family groups who accept unionism only grudgingly, who are irate at the insertion of a discussion of right-to-work laws into a program booklet. There are C.F.M. people who refuse to face up to the race problem and fail to see it as Christianity's scandal. In fact, some groups in the family apostolate become quite alarmed at the thought of C.F.M.'s concerning itself with the social order, which they consider outside the rightful scope of a family movement. If they had their way, they would limit the area of family action to strictly domestic subjects, such as child raising, family liturgy and allied topics.

Yet a movement like the lay apostolate must draw upon the best talent in the Church. Generally speaking, the people most capable of such leadership will have higher education and will occupy responsible and rewarding positions in our economic society. Residentially, these people tend to be stratified according to their economic status, and for this reason we must look increasingly to the suburb in the future. Lay saints can flower in Everdawn Heights as on the sidewalks of New York—in fact, a case might easily be made that Everdawn Heights should be a better anteroom to heaven than a neighborhood where social conditions have spawned great injustice and social dislocations.

The fact that some individuals or groups in the family apostolate do not see the social question or the race problem as a Christian's responsibility should not surprise us. C.F.M. brings into its fold people who are spiritually unformed, like novices to a novitiate. With proper guidance from the chaplain, the enlightened leadership of others in the movement, and the grace of God, such people can in time see these problems for what they are. The immediate and more crucial question is: Should discussion of such subjects be part of the official program? Is the family apostolate to form people for the narrow confines of their own homes or for the world they encounter? The priests and laity who have grown with the Catholic Worker and the social action movement can give only the answer they feel in the marrow of their bones. Newly ordained priests and recently married couples without this background may have another answer.

The priest's role in social action is not to solve problems, of course, but constantly to remind everyone that not only are people to be redeemed, but redemption is to be brought to institutions, so that their structures may reflect the justice and charity that Christ proclaimed. This is a work of vital importance. It would be a disastrous step backward if the Church in the United States did not have a body of lay people dedicated to the perfection of the social order through the continuance of the social action movement. Such lay people must be found and encouraged.




Admittedly, this work presents a more difficult challenge than it once did. The appeal is no longer on bread-and-water issues or to an anti-Communist crusade inside labor unions. The problems that must now be tackled are more subtle. For instance, what, if anything, is to be done about the expanding corporate giants? How can the American economy contribute to



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a solution of the problem of population explosion in Asia? Automation, tax policy, urban redevelopment and metropolitan planning—these are random examples of problems on which groups of experts could well pool their abilities in an effort to find Christian approaches of benefit to the entire community.

In this general connection, it seems to me that the Houses of Hospitality and Interracial Centers have a great and continuing contribution to make to the lay apostolate in general, even aside from their main reasons for existing. Young people in economically better neighborhoods need the challenge and contact provided by these Houses and Centers, which serve as a constant reminder to our middle-class majority that poverty and injustice do exist in our midst. For this reason we need them just as much as the poor who are served in them, if in a different way. If the lay apostolate in this country were ever to lose touch with the poor and the oppressed, we would have suffered an inestimable loss.

In itself, the family apostolate is a healthy development in the field of the lay apostolate in general. It is capable of preparing thousands of people for deeper apostolic living, and of effecting healthy changes in one of the basic institutions of any society, the family. All this is, certainly, eminently worthwhile. Yet it would be a sad day for the Church, I am convinced, if this or any other form of the apostolate ever forgot its roots, if it failed to develop a hunger and thirst for justice and a love for the poor and the naked in every corner of the world. I trust that day will never come.

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**MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS**

# New Frontiers

LYDWINE VAN KERSBERGEN

WHEN FATHER Jacques van Ginneken, S.J., great scholar and apostle, spoke of a lay mission movement back in 1920, he was regarded as a visionary dreaming improbable dreams. But this did not stop him from making his daring prophecy: "I see in our own time an apostolic laity going forward en masse to the mission fields . . . It will be a characteristic of the twentieth century that Catholic missionary bishops from all over the world will invite lay people to mission countries, and in this way the harvest will be reaped in great abundance . . . "

Today his prophecy has found substantial realization. In the great upsurge of the lay apostolate which marks the Church in the twentieth century, a vigorous new current is moving missionward. In Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, young lay women, even married couples are laboring on the frontiers of the Church, fired by an apostolic ideal, contributing their energies and skills to the conversion of the world.

According to one recent report, there are now twenty-one lay mission groups with some two thousand members working in seventy-five countries throughout the world. These movements vary widely in scope, numbers, experience and extent of work. Some, like the Grail Movement and the A.F.I. (*Auxiliaires Féminines Internationales*) are exclusively for women; others, for instance the C.U.A.M.M. of Padua (*Collegio Universitario Aspiranti Medici Missionari*), are made up of lay men; still others, like *Ad Lucem* of Paris which has sent over three hundred professional workers overseas, include men, women and married couples. Some of these groups restrict themselves exclusively to medical work; others embrace a wide variety of professions and skills—in agriculture, medicine, education, social work, journalism, the arts. The oldest of the lay mission movements, the *Missionsärztliches Institut* of Würzburg (Medical Mission Institute), has over thirty years of service to its credit. The Canadian "Groupe Ricci," founded in 1952, describe themselves as "the Benjamins" and are still preparing to send their first members overseas. Undoubtedly, they will be succeeded by other "Benjamins" as the lay mission apostolate gathers strength.

BUT WHAT IS the role of the lay apostle? To be sure, the missions stand in perpetual need of workers; there are never enough priests and religious to undertake the tasks which so urgently need to be done. But to regard lay workers simply as substitutes for priests and nuns would be to overlook their distinctive function and contribution. As Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard points out in *Priests Among Men*, "The laity have an irreplaceable work to do. They have their own wit-

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ness to bear. In giving the laity a free hand, the Church is not making the best of a bad job, using the laity as substitutes until such time as she has reliable priests to take over the direction of the temporal order. On the contrary, she intends, and without any ulterior motive, to confide to the laity the full responsibility for human society."

The laity have their own witness to bear, and perhaps their first function—one which neither priest nor religious can perform—is to give the witness of Catholicism fully lived in lay life. The example of "Christianity in the market place" is often sorely needed in areas where the conduct of colonial officials and rapacious business men has led the local people to associate the "Christian" West with greed, materialism and religious indifference. Even in new Christian communities, there is a tendency to develop the secularist mentality which regards the vigorous practice of the Faith as the exclusive province of priests and nuns. "In the mind of my new converts," one missioner writes, "the living of the Faith is not associated enough with the life of the lay person. That the layman lives his religion profoundly, that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the center of his life, that Christian ideas and customs leaven all his activities—all this is a revelation to the newly-converted people in the missions."

A second function of the lay worker is to put professional skills at the service of the Church. The planting and development of the Church in the rapidly evolving societies of Africa, Asia and Latin America are vastly more complex works today than they were fifty years ago. The Church must have at her command a great variety of skills—in agriculture, engineering, public health, medicine, education, communication, social work, community development.

Among the millions of newly independent peoples in Africa and Asia, a tremendous aspiration for education is astir, and Catholic educators are needed if a Christian spirit is to permeate the new educational systems. The following request from a bishop in the Malay States is typical: "I have openings for Catholic lecturers in the new free university, positions which will likely be filled by Communists if you have no Catholic intellectuals to fill the gap." From Uganda, Bishop Joseph Kiwanuka, first African bishop of modern times, makes an urgent plea for staff for a secondary school for girls. From the Sudan comes a request for journalists: "We are planning to start in a few months the publication of a weekly newspaper of Catholic inspiration. . . ." Journalists, doctors, university professors, social workers—clearly it is not possible for the clergy and religious alone to provide the technical competence needed in these many different spheres. The laity, whose vocation takes them into the professions, have their special contributions to make in the missions.

IN ONE RESPECT, nowever, the vocation of the lay missioner is like that of every missionary: to make himself dispensable. The goal of the priest missionary is to plant the Church, with all the organs necessary for her life, and he cannot consider his task accomplished until he has trained a native clergy to take his place. Similarly, the goal of the lay missioner, of course under the direction of the hierarchy, is to work for the full development of the lay apostolate, with local lay leaders taking over the entire responsibility. The lay missioner can help the local laity to understand their specific role in the Church and to develop a sense of personal responsibility for the conversion of their people.

Perhaps most important of all, it is by working side by side in apostolic endeavors that the lay missioner can best help the local leaders. In this close collaboration, the one can contribute his experience of Christian life and apostolate together with an objective view of the local problems; the other brings his intimate understanding of the people, their mentality, their language, their needs and aspirations. Out of this collaboration will come the necessary adaptation of apostolic training to local needs, as well as the most fruitful approaches to the twofold apostolic task: the conversion of individuals and the Christianization of institutions.

This latter goal—to Christianize the social institutions—is so complex that it deserves special discussion. To penetrate the temporal order with Christian principles, to build a Christian culture, to foster social institutions and an environment which help rather than hinder man in his search for God—this is the specific responsibility of the lay apostle whether at home or abroad, but in the changing cultures of mission lands, it has special implications. Under the impact of Western industrial urban civilization, the feudal societies of Asia, the tribal societies of Africa, the traditional Catholic cultures of Latin America have been thrown into profund upheaval. In a few brief years, the people of such cultures experience a social evolution that took centuries in the West. Little wonder that there is a crisis in authority and government, in morals and religion, in economic life, in the entire cultural pattern.

Precisely because these societies are in flux, the opportunities for Christian influence, for shaping the patterns of economic, political and cultural life, are vast and far-reaching. Take, for example, the change in the position of women, certainly one of the major social changes now taking place in Asia and Africa. The African woman, emerging from polygamy, from a rigidly inferior position, is grasping eagerly for education and for the freedoms enjoyed by women of the West. The desire for freedom can carry her to an extreme and disrupt African family life. Or it may be possible to give a Christian direction to this powerful



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current, provided that a nucleus of African women leaders can be formed who will find the balance between freedom and oppression, and who will set a Christian pattern, safeguarding both the dignity of womanhood and the unity of the family.

FOR THE LAY apostle going overseas, intercultural relations require special adaptation. He must make sincere and strenuous efforts to orient himself toward another people, toward a mentality, customs and culture which are strange to him. He must be prepared to enter sympathetically into the new environment, to avoid passing judgment, above all to avoid making comparisons with the life he has left. It is especially important for the lay apostle to rise above ethnocentrism and to achieve a real love of his adopted country, for the whole strength of his apostolate depends upon his oneness with the people, his deep identification with ordinary lay life.

Nationalism, racial feeling, distrust of the West and of Christianity—all combine to make the task of the lay missioner difficult and delicate. A member of *Ad Lucem,* writing from Africa, gives a glimpse of the tact, the humility, the profound stripping of self which genuine adaptation demands: "Either we are Western teachers, that is to to say, we impose our views, our principles, our institutions, and for a time we have the illusion of making disciples who are one with us; but this soon leads to disillusionment, for a forced assimilation is quickly rejected. Or, on the other hand, we are willing simply to be catalysts, facilitating experiments, discreetly directing, encouraging, participating from within, but without imposing and quite willing not to be followed. . . . Young people must be found who are willing to be partners in a strange form of symbiosis, taking advantage of African aspirations to give them what they lack, but without a superiority complex and without impatience. These young people must forego any attempt to make the Africans happy in spite of themselves, and must be willing even to be put aside as useless or as temporarily suspect."

By what sort of training can we prepare lay apostles for this delicate, demanding and most important task on the frontiers of the Church? The lay mission groups are deeply concerned about an adequate training for their members, and the U.F.E.R. federation devoted its 1955 Annual to a summary of the training programs of its member organizations. All take for granted a high level of competence in the professional field—agriculture, medicine, education, social service—relying upon the universities and professional schools for this aspect of the formation. Their own training programs are directed toward moral and spiritual preparation and toward intellectual orientation for mission work. Within this general framework, the training programs vary greatly in scope, and because the programs are so varied, it may be most fruitful to outline the program I know best—the Grail mission training—as a concrete illustration of cultural adaptation.

THE GRAIL PROGRAM is planned for young women with professional or semi-professional skills who wish to give a definite term of service to the missionary Church, or who seek a lifetime dedication in the lay mission apostolate as permanent members of the Grail.

First place in their training is given to apostolic formation, for the lay apostle overseas is engaged essentially in a spiritual work and needs the vision of his vocation as a part of the Divine Plan for the conversion of the world; he needs, too, the solid supernatural virtues which will sustain him in the midst of often staggering obstacles, the ability to continue his personal striving after holiness without the usual spiritual supports. The aim of the training is to develop mature Christians, who know how to nourish themselves at the primary sources of the Christian spirit: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments, the prayer of the Church, Holy Scripture; who have developed the art of prayer and made it an integral part of their daily lives; who have grasped the spirit of the Cross and have learned to find the Cross in the small events of the daily routine as well as in the greater issues of life. There are study sessions and group discussions on the liturgy, on Scripture, on the divine life and the principles of growth in grace. But even more important than study is the daily living together in a Christian family pattern, sharing prayer and work, feasting and fasting, striving above all to grow in love, quick to see and to serve Christ in others.

Intellectually, the orientation is twofold: to the missions and to the specific principles of the modern lay apostolate. Missionary orientation begins with a solid doctrinal basis of the theology of the missions and includes an introduction to mission history, methods of establishing the Church, the principle of adaptation. A series of lectures by outstanding authorities surveys the expansion of Europe and its impact on mission lands, the major mission areas and the factors influencing the development of Christianity in these areas, such significant world problems as nationalism, Communism, colonialism, race relations, population pressures.

Students are introduced to sociology and social anthropology, and theory is translated into practice through contact both with experienced missioners and with people from other cultures. New York affords rich opportunities for cultural interchange: exhibits, UN activities, the numerous national communities carrying on their traditions within the metropolitan



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area, the films and theater, etc. Through contact with foreign students and through services to such minority groups as the Puerto Ricans, the future lay apostles begin to develop sympathy and appreciation for other customs and ways of life; they learn how to receive as well as to give.

At the same time, they embark upon a systematic study of the role of the laity in the Church: the theology of the lay apostolate; the papal directives for lay action; secularism and the need for an organized lay apostolate to meet the problems of a complex age; the special spheres of lay responsibility—family and community, the role of woman, work and social action, leisure and culture; the modern lay movements. On the practical level students gain experience in the methods and techniques of lay action by assisting in actual apostolic programs.

Another feature of the program is the development of such practical skills as the home arts and nutrition, gardening, first aid, hygiene and sanitation. The missions need specialists, but the woman specialist will be of little avail unless she is also an all-round woman, able to cope with the hundred and one emergencies of mission life. One can hardly give a course in "meeting emergencies," but one has to prepare resourceful women, accustomed to solve the problems of daily living not only by the latest technological devices but by using their own ingenuity and the natural resources at hand.

UNDERLYING the entire program is the emphasis on teamwork: its doctrinal basis in the Mystical Body of Christ, its practical realization in the pattern of Christian family life during the training period, its crucial importance in the field. The team makes possible a diversity of talents and capabilities, an increased effectiveness in work, mutual inspiration and support. But the deepest reason for teamwork is the powerful witness of the Christian community—"See how these Christians love one another." The team is a Mystical Body in miniature, a concrete demonstration that unity in Christ transcends all human differences.

Less than fifty years ago, America was still a mission country under the Propagation of the Faith. Today America has emerged from a mission territory to a major mission sending country. American Catholics are increasingly aware of their responsibility not only to supply material resources in the world mission of the Church, but to prepare trained personnel, and a steadily growing corps of American missionary priests and nuns is serving the Church all over the globe.

Now the shrinking, swiftly changing world of today confronts American Catholics with a new challenge: the need for lay apostles who will give their energies, their talents and skills, for the building of the Church overseas. Here is a new kind of pioneering that calls for lay people afire with the vision of the Mystical Body, willing to stand beside their Asian, African or Latin American brothers and sisters and help them to infuse a Christian spirit into societies in ferment. Americans have a tradition of pioneering, and already the American laity have evinced a great surge of interest in the lay mission apostolate. May countless American lay men and women rise to the present challenge. May they give themselves generously to this new form of pioneering.

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## THE GARDEN

January not June. Then why the scent
Of wild heliotrope, of pale yellow roses
Why ghostly music, and a measured dance
Of graceful shadows under the evening moon?
They rise those phantoms whose vitality
Is greater than the living, whose quick blood stream
Is poured from the hectic moon. O thou Selene, Queen
Of the sleeping senses, do not scatter them
Two lovers who now cross the garden, halt, embrace.

The centuries roll back, and yesterday
Is one with the flooded grass, one with the agile grace—
That quick retentive mind, that almost caught
Genius from the compelling moon, subtle prophetic
thought
From captive tides, from sharp air, from moving rivers
From each distinctive season's special dower.
And one with the shy smile and delicate face
One who loves more, one who loves less
The season does not prosper. Selene does not bless
Her lovers, and her cold indifferent charm
Weaves the rough coils of hovering tragedy—
With frustrate beauty of the sleeping moon.

Now locked (a moment) in each others arms
They move and then dissolve in history
The wars, the eternal wars shall separate
The dead must strew the garden, gunshot beat
Against the window panes, the bloodstains on the grass
Linger for centuries, lightly as autumn petals
Fall from a withering tree. So shall your loves pass
One shall remember always—one forget.

And then how beautiful in memory
That winter scene, that arrested glow, when all
Was fulfilled in time, when all that ought to be
Took place in time, fulfillment of all passion
Under the moon, under the hostile moon
Beneath the living heavens, under the unfriendly stars.

MARYA ZATURENSKA.



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SHORT STORY

# Feuille Morte

ISOBEL ENGLISH

NOW, WHEN SHE described the emotion to herself, or even to other people, although it was something like twenty years since the day she had first met him, she could still invest each detail with the original flavor of exquisite uncertainty: a tangle and blurring of words, unfinished sentences tapering off into a sad little smile and a delicate drooping of the wrists. The whole of her life was mysteriously shadowed, as the brim of her hat cast lilac splashes on her cheeks: "You see, my dear, the little secret was to keep them like two happy saucepans, just off the boil." She would have described the movement of her hands as she expressed this emotional feat, this refinement in the art of love, as "sheer poetry"—leaving the confidant of the moment deeply aware of his own gaucherie.

To maintain the poetry in her life, to feed and fatten the emotion once it had been regularized (after her husband had, like a dying man, made several sharp strokes in the air—quite insignificant and entirely useless—and then like David turned his face to the wall) and to maintain the atmosphere of shadowy not-quite-love, had been as simple as turning the gramophone handle: a stocking or silk scarf pushed into the sound box to take off edges of the human voice and the whispering indefinable subtlety of "*La vie est vaine . . .* " followed by "*Votre âme est un paysage choisi.*" Oh, it had all been so exactly as she had hoped and wished it might be, from the moment in her fourteenth year when she had first opened a book of Verlaine.

In Bournemouth, in spite of the pines and the landscaped thickets of rhododendrons that blackened the naturally steep framework of the town, there was a nostalgic discontent in her heart. Perhaps retirement had brought an oversimplification of her situation, or there was no longer the need to slip away in the early evening to the lounge of some old-fashioned Kensington Hotel to meet him, now that they all lived under the almost conventual roof of "Heathlands"—a boarding house (in a road that stood at right angles to the promenade) boasting a sea view, subsequently discovered to be so only from the lavatory and landing windows.

"My husband's friend is an artist," she had told the hotel owners; "for him it is essential to have some vision of nature to feed on." And she would leave him, after a gentle pat on the bony dome of his skull, letting her hand travel down to the tip of his finely arched nose—more a gesture of regret than of affection, and not to be prolonged. She would leave him sitting in the upright wicker chair at the window, bent just a little forward because that was the way most comfortable for his poor back since the last stroke.

After tea had always been their time: between the hours of five and six, before afternoon faded into evening, was the time when they could come closest to each other in spirit. In the London winters, she had hurried through the streets to the little green and white bandstand perched at the edge of the Round Pond. There he would be waiting, quite naturally, with all the grave elegance of the aristocrat; as if he had just stepped down from the white-pillared house behind the trees where he had sat all the afternoon counting and recounting the number of trees felled in his forest during the past month.

IT WAS DIFFERENT now, in Bournemouth. To begin with, he was unable to take more than a few tottery steps towards the washstand. (She secretly resented the sturdy, almost indecently developed calves of her husband, whose requirements were no more than the distance from the hotel to the cinema.)

Lately she had taken to walks by herself; along the windy front, chattering softly in a language that was neither French nor English; forming words and ideas that floated out to sea, insubstantial as paper boats. Sometimes she would hesitate and speak to a face; or stare down into strange young eyes searching for the soul behind. Once she had cried out: "Don't look at me as if I was an old woman, can't you see that I am young behind my eyes?" She would tell Edward of these encounters, describing them with dipping swallow-like gestures and fluttering sighs; trying, although she knew it to be impossible, to revive the feelings of twenty years ago. "If you could only believe in me enough to walk." This was the final barb before she left him to change her dress for dinner.

After his second stroke there was horrifying change in his physical condition, and their relationship ended abruptly. She could stand before him in all the gathered beauty of gauzy hat and trailing chiffon scarf, stand with her hands actually touching the crumpled skin of

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his cheeks, and all he could do was droop slightly the lid of his left eye to acknowledge his pleasure in her presence.

He was completely paralyzed, and the power of speech was denied him. "He is still so very handsome, my poor Edward," she wrote to a friend in Paris, "I stand and embrace his unfeeling hands, and it is as perfect as caressing an effigy carved in coldest marble."

After several weeks of endurance—a trained nurse installed in the room next to his, and she herself constantly in attendance, as she expressed it—she could bear it no longer. "One cannot waste one's entire spirit on an animal," she remarked to her husband after a long night in the sickroom when the nurse was off duty; "he knows nothing now, except the fear that his milk slops might be taken away from him before he has emptied the bowl."

It has been terrible to see the fear in those greedy eyes, the beseeching look, when as a gesture of defiance to prove to herself that she could still evoke a spark of emotion even in an almost dead man, she had playfully taken the half-filled bowl from under his chin and put it on the dressing table. Then she had quite coldly folded her hands and stared into his empty face. "Of course," she hastened to add when she was describing the episode, "I let him finish up the remains in the bowl afterwards."

They arranged for him to go to a home for indigent gentlefolk situated a little way out of Bournemouth in the direction of Southampton. "When I go to see Edward," she thought, riding along in a single-decker bus, "I shall try to think of all the trees that have cast shadows over my life. I shall try to think of him lying there, quietly resting, but supremely aware." She bothered to redden the full part of her puckered lips; to put on a romantic hat and scarf and fasten a faded velvet rose to the shoulder of her dress. It was after all, just as it had always been. The position had never altered, she told herself; whether she was walking swiftly through the park, the wind ruffling the bunch of feathery curls over her forehead, her hands plunged into the little fur muff, going towards the bandstand; or whether she rode on a Southern Counties bus to visit him, now that he was indisposed. It was still exactly as it had always been; love had never grown cold. She carried this feeling with her right up to the final stages of the journey, until she had her hand on the knob and was pushing open the door.

ON THE LAST Saturday of his life, the matron sent a request for her to step into the office on her way out. "But he seems exactly the same," she had remonstrated, noting the hard unfeeling quality of the other woman's cuffs. "He moved his eyes, twice he moved his eyes, there was a glint of amusement that I could interpret, he was smiling at me with his eyes."

The matron felt for the watch pinned beneath the thick stuff of her apron. "Nevertheless, Mrs. Ellworth, he is a very sick man as you undoubtedly know, and if there are any relatives who might wish to see him, they should be informed at once. The doctor said that it can only be a matter of days."

Walking out of the narrow hall where the air smelled of illness and cooking unsuccessfully masked by disinfectant, she came suddenly into the brilliant sun, that showed up and made uglier the yellow gravel of the paths. "That terrible woman . . . " she thought, wincing as the stones pierced the flimsy fabric of her shoes—"That terrible woman trying to probe into his past, when I have been his entire past." She spoke to her husband at dinner; felt the isolation of long unshared conversation closing in on her, and went to bed early.

Three days later, he died, quite alone, at three o'clock in the morning. They told her on the telephone: "He must have slipped away while Nurse was answering another bell; he looked so much the same when she returned that she did not at first notice that he had gone."

She covered her face with black tulle pinned firmly into the crown of her hat, and rode over on the bus at the same time as usual to see him. When she saw the sympathetic expression on the matron's face, and then the smoothed-out countenance of the recently prepared dead, a shudder went through her body. "You've changed him," she hissed, when she came out of the death chamber, "you've tampered with his expression. No one, not even I, ever saw such a look of resignation on his face." She wondered if she had said too much, if indeed she had spoken at all. The matron continued to regard her with the same look of fixed sympathy.

Later in the afternoon, she walked along the treed roads, up and down, in and out of the frequent hollows black with laurel; sitting sometimes to rest on a seat; letting the wind touch her face, move her curls as it had done so often before. She did not weep for Edward, or even think very much about his death. She whispered little snatches of poetry under her breath, sometimes repeating the same lines over and over again; savoring the words separately as if each had a secret and detached meaning of its own.

They announced his death in the *Times,* giving "Heathlands" Private Hotel as his last address. The nursing home she refused to acknowledge. It had been a great failure. He had hardly known her there—and perhaps things might have been different. "Imagine," she wrote several weeks later to a friend, "his ex-wife has turned up here to stay. She has insisted that about five Masses in Latin be said for him. I stand by and say nothing, and only hope the incantation will not be fatal to his soul."



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# THE BOUNCING BALL

ARTHUR Schlesinger, Jr. sent out an SOS to liberals in a recent issue of the Sunday *Times*. The liberal today, he wrote, must declare war on the "growing homogenization of American society." The enemy is no longer "a conspiracy of wealth seeking to grind the faces of the poor, but a conspiracy of blandness seeking to bury all tension and conflict in American life under a mass of platitude and piety."

Like other men in his age bracket (and mine), Mr. Schlesinger has been turning his thoughts of late to the Organization Man, Outer Directed by the Power Elite, seduced by the Conservative Mind and lost in the Lonely Crowd.

Schlesinger belongs to the generation that formed its basic political attitudes during the Roosevelt era, went into the war as very young men and came out determined to extend the pre-war New Deal.

For some reason the immediate postwar period now seems as remote as the Jazz Age, though it is only a decade or so behind us. But for the generation of which I speak it was a golden moment.

Of course we had our share of problems in 1946 and '47. Most of us were newly married and few could find a decent place to live. There were other problems centered around the "readjustment" to civilian life—getting used to living in families, finding jobs, picking up studies or careers that were put aside when the bombs fell on Pearl Harbor. But, bitter as some of these difficulties were, we basked in a sunshine-after-the-storm glow; we had a wonderful sense of renewal.

Servicemen's papers and magazines during the war were full of promises of all that would be done at home and abroad after the business of defeating Hitler and the Japs was out of the way. Along with cartoonist's conceptions of the crazily sleek "postwar car," TV, ball-point pens and a thousand technical miracles—most of which actually appeared in time—the military publications emphasized the inevitable "crusade" aspects of the war. We were fighting to destroy fascism, a purely negative end, but, more than that, we were fighting to create world peace and, at long last, to produce at home the New Deal dream of a society politically liberal, economically abundant and brimming with tolerance and intelligence.

When the war was over the liberal effort got under way with such organizations as Americans for Democratic Action and the American Veterans Committee. Younger liberals came to the fore—we began to hear about Hubert Humphrey, James Wechsler, Jim Loeb, the younger Schlesinger himself. Bill Mauldin, who had gained fame as a battlefield cartoonist, turned his talents to the perennial liberal themes. Among the older generation, Bishop Sheil, Mrs. Roosevelt and for a while Henry Wallace were accepted as spokesmen for the ex-GIs' youthful aspirations. The war experience, we believed, had invested our generation with special wisdom so it was with no special surprise that we hailed the emergence of men like Arthur Miller, Irwin Shaw and Norman Mailer as unseasonably mature artists.

The Golden Moment of postwar liberalism was brief indeed. It seemed that the excitement about the new United Nations had barely died down when Mr. Churchill began to talk about the Iron Curtain and Mr. Truman came before the nation to state some unpleasant facts about our recent brave ally. Things changed fast.

The ADA became almost a dirty word, the AVC faded swiftly, Henry Wallace lived under a cloud, New Deal liberalism seemed dead and the conventions which celebrated it were reported like wakes.

The Cold War dominated the headlines. But the cold peace dominated our lives.

The nation's roads were clogged with the streamlined cars that once looked so ridiculous when the cartoonists drew them in *Yank*. We got our economy of abundance, with jobs for everybody. We even got housing, in the suburbs, and jobs, in the new-style corporations where everyone *wants* to be a Company Man. We got striking progress in race relations and anti-Semitisim became hardly a problem. According to a study published in the current *Reader's Digest*, we got more stable marriages, the lowest divorce rate in years and more children per family than anyone would have predicted in 1946.

We got these things but not as the immediate result of any liberal crusade. The only crusade that caught the popular imagination was Dwight Eisenhower's 1952 campaign. Stevenson, who spoke the language of our generation, was twice trounced.

I know what Arthur Schlesinger is talking about, I do. He does not like this "blandness." He does not feel at home with it. He likes adequate housing but he does not like suburbia. He likes full employment but he does not like the Gray Flannel Suit. He likes the New Deal but not its present Republican management.

He does not like going along with the bouncing ball even when it is bouncing the right way.

I know what he means. I think I know how he feels. And I also think I am growing old.

JOHN COGLEY.



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# THE SCREEN

## THIS EARTH, THIS REALM, THIS ENGLAND

ANYONE WHO has been faithful to his television set through the years can tell you that the English make good films (like "Richard III," "Brief Encounter," "Breaking Through the Sound Barrier," the Guinness comedies and others) and bad films (like—but the list is too long). Several new English movies probably follow the same proportion of good and bad. The Boulting Brothers, who have been making good films for a long time and delighted us last year with their satire "Private's Progress," aren't quite so funny in their latest effort. "Brothers in Law" (note the absence of hyphens) needles English barristers, particularly young ones, in roles nicely played by the stars of "Private's Progress." Ian Carmichael, once again portraying a very confused young man who somehow muddles through, starts his legal career as an apprentice in a law office. And Richard Attenborough, once again playing a brash young man who thinks he knows all the answers, serves as his guide at the office and his apartment-mate at home. Both work for a middle-aged, well-established barrister delightfully played by Miles Malleson, who behaves like a blustering character right out of Dickens, and who, when he realizes that Carmichael never quite understands what he is doing in a law case, advises him never to hesitate.

"Brothers in Law" has some hilarious situations and, though the romantic side of the plot is slight, Jill Adams is quite pleasant to look at. While the script, written from Henry Cecil's novel, is funny, its repetition is tiring. But the Boulting Brothers (John produced and Roy directed this time) know how to show off their casts and locale to advantage and how to make an audience laugh. There is cause for laughter here, from the beginning with its quote from Shakespeare: "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers," to the finale with a quote from the Boultings: "If all the characters in this film were not fiction, it would be alarming."

ANOTHER English film that lampoons professionals is "Doctor at Large." Dirk Bogarde, whose career as a doctor developed through "Doctor in the House" and "Doctor at Sea," once again plays the young man who's trying to settle down. When another young doctor (Michael Medwin) cuts him out of the Senior House Surgeon job at the hospital, Bogarde has an amusing struggle with an employment agency and becomes an assistant to a stingy doctor whose sexy wife proves too much for Dirk. From there he moves to a position with a fancy Park Lane physician whose neurotic women patients also get amorous with handsome Dirk. Under Producer Betty Box and Director Ralph Thomas a good cast surround Bogarde: Donald Sinden as the interne who is still failing his exams, Muriel Pavlov as a romantic interest, James Robertson Justice as the grumpy head doctor who puts the young men through their paces, and others in well-played minor roles, mainly as patients. As a movie, however, "Doctor at Large" runs pretty thin, and its jokes, many of which are repetitions of the earlier items in this series, are wearing out.

A MOVIE dealing with a similar theme, "The Gentle Touch" is a sort of comedy-drama soap-opera about trainee nurses in a London hospital. At first there is some difficulty distinguishing one student from the other, since the film is packed with pretty girls in the roles. But as the many training and examination scenes continue, the script and Director Pat Jackson concentrate on a few of the hard-working beauties, especially Adrienne Corri as a wholesome Irish lass, Delphi Lawrence as a smart-alecky type who sees the training as a good opportunity for getting a doctor husband, and luscious blond Belinda Lee as the very serious one who is truly inspired by Florence Nightingale as the lady with the lamp. Because of her good performance and the fine speeches she gives every now and then, there is no difficulty in singling out Diana Wynyard as the Matron at St. Augustine's. Actually Michael Balcon's good production was handsomely photographed, in Technicolor, at Guy's Hospital in London.

WHEN IT comes to making suspense thrillers with serious touches, the English are as good as any. In "Decision Against Time" test pilot Jack Hawkins flies alone in a plane from which five men have already bailed out but which he has to continue to fly for 35 minutes to lighten the petrol load and (hopefully) save the plane. The scene shifts during this suspenseful scene to the crowd below at the flying field, to his wife (Elizabeth Sellars) who is going through a more-or-less routine day, and back to Hawkins sweating it out and wondering if life has been worth-while. After flying for some twenty years, he can't even afford the new house he wants so badly for his wife and two little boys. Director Charles Crichton develops real suspense, but his main interest is not in the thrills but in Hawkins and his family—and in the aftermath of the exciting experience. And Crichton has done a first-rate job in making these concerns important.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.



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# Fable of the Terminal Year 1963

ON THE BEACH. By Nevil Shute. Morrow. $3.95.

By WILLIAM DUNLEA

THE SCENE of Mr. Nevil Shute's cautionary fable is Australia in the terminal year of grace 1963, two years after the Russo-Chinese cobalt war which was precipitated by the Nato-Russian nuclear war, which had been touched off by the Israeli-Arab war; but of course Albania instigated the whole thing, as reported by a reliable source in Kenya. Anyway, no one was left alive long enough in the Northern Hemisphere to hold a news conference to confirm or deny the impression of the earth-inheriting rabbits that it was all accidental suicide.

It is anybody's guess why the Third War broke in 1961; the possibility that by 1971 there should be enough interplanetary passenger rockets to avert complete naughting of the human race may have nothing to do with it. None of us would be wise to sneer at Mr. Shute's tocsin; it is sounded with tough British understatement (greatly accommodated by the stiff locale)—always of course a little too voluble to be subtle. It does help convince us that failing to see the light we may see the mushroom sooner than we fear, and if so we shall all be in the same boat—preferably a submarine. These circumstances, however, allow him a somewhat unfair edge over his readers.

The few thousand Americans who escaped radiation poisoning, mostly Navy men, are stationed variously south of the equator. One of them is Dwight Towers, commander of the atomic-powered submarine *Scorpion,* moored off Williamstown. The radioactivity is slowly blanketing the Southern Hemisphere, all of which within six months will be too "hot" for habitation. Down under they can't really believe it's coming, and among the Americans hope dies hard that there is yet life in the States. This hope feeds on the intermittent though unintelligible radio signals still coming through from the Seattle area; while a new theory of reduced radio activity has circulated general hope for a reprieve.

Towers and his crew make a last stab up the West Coast, surfacing and hailing at key ports: the dead are not raised; but lights are ablaze and apart from the wreck of the Golden Gate everything looks normal. At Seattle a yeoman jumps ship, choosing to die in his home town. At Santa Maria, an engineer going ashore in a radiation suit discovers the operation of the mysterious transmitter to be a fluke. Soon also the theory of slowly decontaminating air is pricked. Back in Melbourne people are in a fever of planning for a long future: there is so little time in which to plan. There the pursuits of Tower's friends indicate that each is going mad in an eccentric way. Finally the lights there begin to go out, and *Scorpion,* her ghostly mission accomplished, proceeds to her last rendezvous, vanishing in the mist like the world of man. "Not with a bang but a whimper."

Nevil Shute is a journeyman fabulist; fantasy simulating reality is his preserve. A more gifted writer wouldn't be so successful visualizing men and women of a residual humanity, with no future and nothing to think about it. This is not prophesy but fictional essayism; it is not eschatology, it is Univac. The prophet concerns himself with the future while it is still present; Mr. Shute hires fate as his co-author and has a wry old time knocking down his props. We are not harrowed that they become extinct, and it isn't even disturbing that the author alone has survived.

Mr. Shute is too seldom inclined to let the obvious or the twice-told alone. When the dialogue is not straight banality it makes too cheap sport of the habits of life that make life a habit. One of the more potent puns is the clerk's assurance to a customer that pills for curtailing radiation agony are on the free list. When Towers is unanimously acclaimed supreme commander of U.S. forces, ruefully he observes that now it is possible for him to run for President.

Suspense would seem as irrelevant as characterization; in the transmitter sequence it comes naturally; otherwise the chills are rather spineless. As respects dramatic possibilities, Mr. Shute rubbed off the wrong half of the globe first. Had the other been so full of phlegmatic sangfroid it could hardly have blown up. Or is this what may prove most lethal in the end?

# The Spontaneous Response

FURTHER PAPERS ON DANTE. By Dorothy Sayers. Harper. $4.

By MARY SHIRAS

CONTINUING her work in translation and commentary on the Divine Comedy, Dorothy Sayers has recently collected a volume of lectures which supplements her earlier *Introductory Papers on Dante.* The range of subjects in the present volume is more scattered, and the emphasis falls more upon the aesthetic values of the poem than on its theological bases, but the mainsprings of Miss Sayers' critical style are just as apparent: her nostalgia for medieval Catholicism and impatience with modern liberalism; her urbane and conversational manner; an intellectual versatility; and above all, her abiding trust in the spontaneous, unconditioned response. The attitude she assumes in these lectures, despite her obvious erudition, is that of the eager, untutored reader who usually avoids the ponderous classics because he wants to be



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entertained, not instructed. But by a happy chance, Dante took Miss Sayers by surprise; nay, by storm. She discovered that he was a marvelous story-teller and not at all the grim writer of allegory that the world had made of him. In a frenzy of excitement over his great comedy, she neglected—she confesses—her work, her meals, her sleep.

A woman of Miss Sayers' intelligence and productivity, assuming the posture of the literary ingénue, could have captivated utterly had she not too often betrayed the strain of protesting—"I assure you, dear reader, I am a very simple person really." Still, in another way, her self-portrait of innocence and candor indicates that she is looking in the right direction, since her appetite for the interesting, the entertaining, the delightful, enabled her to make her examination of meaningful problems as attractive as possible. It is refreshing to open a book on Dante that does not smother one with documents on the fighting Guelfs and Ghibellines, or perplex with the riddles of Dantean sources and influences. One does puzzle over the dark patches on the moon, the geographical position of Earthly Paradise, the bewitching invocation of Pluto in Canto 7 (*"Papè Satan, papè Satan aleppe"*) and other such matters, but most of us had rather the dedicated scholars dedicated themselves to these problems. Because Miss Sayers' warmest interests lie elsewhere, her critical abilities seek larger challenges and, as a consequence, her literary judgments are much more valuable to us than her scholarly speculations.

There is no doubt that we need some sound opinions to clear the air of all the dark mysteries that obscure the *Commedia* from modern vision. Mystery, awe, antipathy, prejudice, and sometimes sheer nonsense. Take the extreme but not so uncommon notion, for example, that the *Commedia* is the *Summa* of St. Thomas, only in rhyme instead of logic. Miss Sayers' chapter "Divine Poet and the Angelic Doctor" shows why the doctor cannot be translated into the poet merely because his theology provides the theological structure for the action in the poem. Another of the lectures that tries to establish an accurate account of Dante and his work, "Dante's Cosmos," contains an imaginary dialogue between Dante and Professor Eddington which reflects not only medieval and modern differences in scientific approach but also in the use of language, ways of arguing, and even in the character of society. These few pages are the most enjoyable bit of reading in the entire volume, and they show how airily and wittily Miss Sayers can handle heavy intellectual matters when she neglects her innocence a little.

The lecture on Dante and Milton approaches this classic contrast of poetic rivals from a psychological point of view and then leads to some rather interesting comparisons of analogous themes in the *Commedia* and *Paradise Lost*.

In the remaining chapters Miss Sayers directs her attention to the aesthetic qualities of the poem. These lectures range from chatty and informal discussions of first impressions, as in . . . "And Telling You a Story," to comparatively careful and considered evaluation as in the chapter "Dante's Virgil."

Miss Sayers' religious convictions obviously do her a great service in her evaluation of the *Commedia*: they prompt her to bring Church doctrine back to the modern reader's attention and to unsettle the modern prejudice against didactic poetry. This involves correcting erroneous notions about Christian dogma and the Church, readjusting misplaced reverence, and softening unwarranted scorn. It also involves a re-evaluation of the poem's comic and serious elements. It is after all not so very astonishing that intelligent but unsympathetic readers have found Dante humorless, obscure, long-winded, pontifical, and outrageously intellectual. But fortunately there are critics like Miss Sayers, with ideas and sympathies almost ideally receptive to Christian allegory, who urge us to follow Dante on the Way of Affirmation as he leaves the burning pitch and purifying fire behind, to watch the living flames that are the souls of the Redeemed, mounting the stellar heavens to the Empyrean.

# Wry, None-too-joyful Humor

YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE. By Ogden Nash. Little, Brown. $3.75.

By RICHARD L. SCHOENWALD

HERE IS another book by Ogden Nash, a volume that has volume, unlike those which enclose a dozen or half-dozen or even a single poem between boards. Nash has been versifying for nearly three decades, and a long list of sizable books testifies to his industry.

He has mastered a craft and made a body of techniques very much his own. The unexpected rhyme becomes expected, but it never turns out to be exactly predictable, so it still carries a punch. The lines bounce, but not to a metronomic count. Rhyme and rhythm together produce much of Nash's effect, which often proves very neatly satisfying. The rest depends on his subjects. His concerns in this collection remain what they have always been, the near and the customary: money (now it's inflation); advertising; age; children (including grandchildren now); animals; privacy; marriage (and wives' habits); cars.

As Russell Maloney saw, "He is the laureate of a generation which had to develop its own wry, none-too-joyful humor as the alternative to simply lying down on the floor and screaming." From the early depression to this time of roaring prosperity Nash has stayed cool. He does not laugh too hard, he does not cry too hard, and his readers stay with him, safely in the center, a place of disdain for ultimates.

Nash turned occasional poetry into a constant occupation and made it pay. No one could profitably turn out amusing verse in the American setting in any other way. Nash is not Chaucer, Byron, or



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Heine. They belong to societies with marked class differences, a theme for heated, loud, comic poetry. When everyone owns the same fin-tail 1957 model, the cheapness of its chrome can't be poked at too hard. The age demands a nice, balanced, thoughtful, undisturbing writer, not a Masters venting his bitterness by Spoon River.

Nash accepts America; America reciprocates. Here is what a poet ought to be, his fans exclaim. They never see more than the surface because there is nothing more to see. Nash never cuts into the depths. His readers behold the surface selves of their neighbors, sometimes they meet their own outward selves, and they go away contented.

They have not been reading poetry. True poetry does not come when the poet says, Let there be a little light, but not on the dark corners, not on the way ahead. The word from which poetry arises is unqualified: Let there be light.

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# Not So Harmless

THE COMFORTERS. By Muriel Spark. Lippincott. $3.50.

By H. A. REINHOLD

MISS SPARK, like Chesterton, Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, has followed the tradition of English Catholic writers by turning to the sophisticated and witty entertainment of writing a first-class mystery story. Not only is she an author of scholarly books on English letters—with works on Mary Shelley, John Masefield and Emily Bronte—but she has a volume of poetry to her credit and has edited poetry. Her training in the field of mystery fiction is of the best: she served in the British Intelligence during the war and lived in Africa for several years. What could be better to make a mind keen and to learn how to follow the involved and sacred skeins of intrigue and counter-intrigue? The slightly ironic overtones of her style are in the fine tradition of English mystery fiction.



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The plot is hilarious; it involves an octogenarian lady and her cronies who brazenly smuggle diamonds into Britain for cold cash, who proceed with sovereign calm and reckless gallantry. There is a mysterious Baron in the customary old bookshop who plays the stooge for them, a bit conventional but with a power of witty conversation that redeems his borrowedness. There is a devilish old spinster of acrid and snooping piety whose connection with the evil one is inferred without much difficulty. There is a do-good, committee woman Lady Bountiful and her befuddled, pious husband who is forever on retreats and engaged in spiritual reading. In addition he is in the fig business in a very lucrative and prosaic way and sports a title awarded because of his merits in moneymaking. There are several disorderly relationships which, although not given the stamp of approval, are touched upon without Puritan indignation. All in all, one might be tempted to classify the book as light English entertainment with a target to shoot barbs at. One never can be quite sure what the characters are taking seriously. The voices, the plot within the plot, the writing of the story on two levels, the spooky and the natural—all is bedlam and intelligent spoofing. When the pious devil drowns, there is a feeling of uncharitable relief and a wish that pious frauds might follow her and leave those who are mediocre or vacillating on the brink of sin, but also lovable, kind and humane.

There is, however, more of plan than one notices on first entranced reading. The characters all fall into classes of graduated Catholicism: there are the harsh, unlovely Georgina Hoggand and her equally unlovely background, the befuddled and sincere psychic heroine Caroline and her non-practicing and skeptical lover and eternal fiancé, the confused and stupid mother of the groom who runs forever about doing confused works of mercy and her fig-producing upper-class husband who reads mystics and ignores the needs of his family. There is a remarkable and neat assortment of Catholic life in England as I have seen it, just like an unbelievable and slightly ridiculous sect in their upper-class and middlebrow sector. There is, thus, a large scale comment in this harmless looking entertainment. No wonder it has the blessing of Evelyn Waugh and no less a critical mind than Graham Greene. We in America have no reason to laugh at these characters: they are with us too. But are we as ready to laugh at ourselves?


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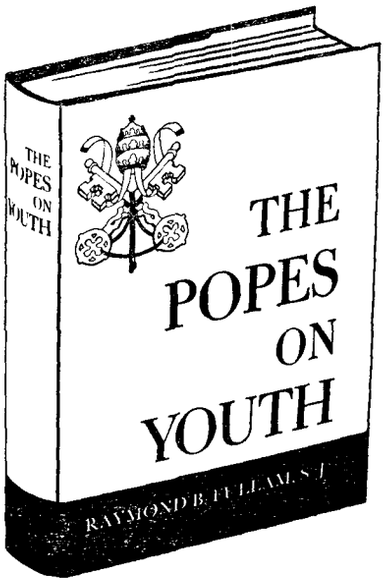


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